Attachment B

Kentucky White Paper on Gifted Education

The White Paper on gifted education, *Kentucky's Future: Mining Untapped Treasure, Children and Youth of the Commonwealth Who Are Gifted and Talented* was released in 2005. The White Paper examines the urgent need to provide challenging educational opportunities for gifted students. Three fundamental beliefs were identified that are still appropriate in 2010. The three fundamental beliefs are:

There is a continuing need for:

1. Ongoing professional development in gifted education

- Most classroom teachers and school administrators have very little or no training in identifying and meeting the unique learning needs of gifted students.
- Gifted students spend the majority of time in school with general classroom teachers so all teachers must know how to change the curriculum and teaching to challenge them.
- The importance of a teacher's ability to meet student needs has been demonstrated by researchers.
- Teachers need training to skillfully modify the curriculum to accommodate the different rates at which students learn as well as their depth of understanding.

KRS 156.095 addresses the issue of professional development programs for all Kentucky teachers that, when thoughtfully considered, could have implications for gifted children. "…Professional development programs shall be made available to teachers based on their needs…." Since gifted children spend the majority of the school day with general classroom teachers, and these teachers have had little training in gifted education, the "need" for professional development does include the issues surrounding educating gifted children. The regulation states that areas for professional development shall include but not be limited to: providing continuous progress; curriculum content and methods of instruction for each content area, including differentiated instruction; integration of performance-based student assessment into daily classroom instruction; nongraded primary programs; research-based instructional practices; curriculum design to serve the needs of students with diverse learning styles and skills and from diverse cultures. Each of these topics could have a gifted education component.

2. Comprehensive identification of gifted students

- Significant achievement gaps exist across all populations. Likewise, giftedness cuts across all populations. Students from minority and low socio-economic groups are underrepresented when students are selected or identified for GT services.

    - Identification of Kentucky's minority gifted and talented young people formally identified for services should echo the percentage of the minority population in Kentucky schools. It does not.

- Under-identification occurs also with those students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The *Achievement Trap*, a study from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, states that high achieving students from low socio-economic backgrounds lose more educational ground and excel less frequently than their higher-income peers each year they are in school.

- Kentucky educators lack expertise in identifying and developing talent in children with multi-exceptionalities (such as giftedness plus a learning disability, ADHD, or deafness).
- The number of K-3 children selected for Primary Talent Pool services represents a mere fraction recommended by the Kentucky regulations on gifted and talented services.
- Kentucky requires identification in five areas, but typically only the specific academic aptitude and general intellectual ability are identified consistently across the Commonwealth. The areas of leadership, creativity, and the visual and performing arts are not adequately identified due to insufficient professional development, fiscal resources, and lack of awareness.

3. Appropriate services for children who are gifted and talented, K - Grade 12

- The use of acceleration results in higher achievement for gifted and talented learners (Kulik, 1992; Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004; Rogers, 1991). The policy implications of the decades of research on acceleration are widely ignored by the greater educational community. The research is expansive and consistent, yet rarely implemented.

  Kentucky is making strides in overcoming the barriers to acceleration in Kentucky schools with the passage in 2009 of Senate Bill 1, *An Act Relating to Education Assessment.* The resulting regulations contain language that promote accelerated learning and make provisions for it to happen.

  KRS 158.6453, Definitions-Assessment of achievement goals.….
  - ✓ Defines accelerated learning: "Accelerated learning" means an organized way of helping students meet individual academic goals by providing direct instruction to eliminate student performance deficiencies or enable students to move more quickly through course requirements and pursue higher level skill development;"
  - ✓ Provide teachers and parents a valid and reliable comprehensive analysis of skills mastered by individual students;
  - ✓ Provide diagnostic information that identifies strengths and academic deficiencies of individual students in the content areas;
  - ✓ Provide information to teachers that can enable them to improve instruction for current and future students;
  - ✓ Provide longitudinal profiles for students;
  - ✓ Ensure school and district accountability for student achievement;
  - ✓ May incorporate end-of-course examinations into the assessment program to be used in lieu of requirements for criterion-referenced;

- ✓ Use the results of the assessment program to determine appropriate instructional modifications for all students in order for students to make continuous progress, including that needed by advanced learners;
- ✓ Counseling students whose scores on the high school readiness examination indicate a high degree of readiness for high school to enroll in accelerated courses;
- ✓ Counseling students whose scores on the college readiness examination administered or the ACT college admissions and placement examination indicate a high degree of readiness for college to enroll in accelerated courses, with an emphasis on Advanced Placement classes; and
- ✓ Summarizing for parents an individual student report for each student in grades three (3) through eight (8) of the student's skills in reading and mathematics. The school's staff shall develop a plan for accelerated learning for any student with identified deficiencies or strengths.

KRS 158.6459, Intervention strategies for accelerated learning….

- ✓ Students whose scores on the high school readiness examination, on the college readiness examination, or on the WorkKeys indicate that advanced work is required in English, reading, or mathematics shall have intervention strategies for accelerated learning incorporated into his or her learning plan;
- ✓ A high school, in collaboration with its school district, shall develop and implement accelerated learning that allows a student's learning plan to be individualized to meet the student's academic needs based on an assessment of test results and consultation among parents, teachers, and the student; and may include changes in a student's class schedule;
- ✓ The Kentucky Department of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education and public postsecondary institutions shall offer support and technical assistance to schools and school districts in the development of accelerated learning; and
- ✓ A student who participates in accelerated learning under this section shall be permitted to take the ACT examination a second time prior to high school graduation at the expense of the Kentucky Department of Education.

- K-12 children require rigorous curriculum. Rigor is learning that is personally challenging to the learner both in the depth of content and in complexity of thought.
- The needs of gifted students differ significantly from other students. The needs arise from gifted children's strengths – their ability to learn at a significantly faster pace and their hunger for advanced, complex curricula.
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of the nature and needs of gifted children lead to a perpetuation of myths and ineffective instructional practices.
- A variety of service options at each grade level, K-12, are necessary to appropriately serve the diversity of needs found within the gifted population.

The use of differentiation is essential to maximize the educational experience for gifted and talented students. Differentiation for gifted students consists of carefully planned, coordinated learning experiences that extend beyond the core curriculum to meet the specific learning needs evidenced by the student. It

combines the curricular strategies of enrichment and acceleration and provides flexibility and diversity. Appropriate differentiation allows for increasing levels of advanced, abstract, and complex curriculum that are substantive and that respond to the learner's needs.

Programming options for gifted and talented students occur in a variety of ways, and research demonstrates the effectiveness of pull-out and specialized classes and their curriculum in raising student achievement.

Gifted education programs and strategies are effective at serving gifted and high-ability students in a variety of educational settings and from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic populations. Gifted education pedagogy can also reverse underachievement in these students (Baum, 1988; Baum, Hébert, & Renzulli, 1999; Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004; Gavin, et al, 2007; Hébert, & Reis, 1999; Little, Feng, VanTassel-Baska, Zuo, Rogers, Avery, 2007; Reis, & Diaz, 1999; Reis, et al, 2007).

- Gifted and talented children need to make continuous progress.

  Gifted and talented elementary students have already mastered from 35-50 percent of the curriculum to be offered in five basic subjects before they even begin the school year (Reis & Purcell, 1993, *National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented*).

  Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System data "suggests students at the highest levels of achievement show somewhat less academic growth from year to year than their lower-achieving peers" (Sanders & Horn, 1998)

The state allocation for gifted and talented education acknowledges that gifted children have unique learning needs that must be addressed. The current allocation of $6,875,400, down from $7,121,500, provides a beginning but in no way covers the full cost of professional development, identification, and appropriate gifted and talented services.

Lack of fiscal resources and issues such as the ones listed above continue to hinder full implementation of the gifted regulation and must be resolved before appropriate services are available for all gifted students in Kentucky schools.

A Rising Tide Lifts All Ships

Gifted and talented children are in our schools at all times whether there are specific services designed for them or not. The needs of these students do not go away if services are reduced. Moreover, providing services to meet the needs of gifted and talented children develops a school environment that promotes learning for all children.

- "A rising tide lifts all ships." So it goes with providing appropriate services for gifted children. As barriers to learning are reduced for this group, doors open for other students.

- Teachers can learn how to differentiate and compact curriculum to provide more challenge to all students, when they have the professional development, time, and support to learn how to effectively implement these skills and strategies.
- The curriculum and pedagogy of gifted programs can be extended to a variety of content areas resulting in higher achievement for both gifted and grade level students when implemented in a wide variety of settings (Baum, 1988; Kulik, 1992; Field, G.B., Gentry, 1999; Gavin, et al, 2007; Reis, et al, 2003; Reis, et al, 2007; Little, Feng,, VanTassel-Baska, Rogers, Avery, 2007; VanTassel-Baska, Zoo, Avery, & Little, 2002).
- The brain changes physically and chemically when challenged (Sousa, 2002). Clark (2002) argues that "environmental stimulation strengthen(s) the brain at the cellular level, leading to enhanced ability to learn and create."
- The struggle to reverse poor achievement among low-income students must be accompanied by a concerted effort to promote and sustain achievement beyond the proficient level for the high ability students within the same population. This should be a district-wide effort.
- Many gifted and talented students have a difficult first year at college because of lack of challenge (in spite of a high grade-point average) in previous years. Challenging curriculum should begin in kindergarten and be expected every year.
- To be scoring at the top of the test is not sufficient information to know if a child is doing well in school. In looking at disaggregated test data, gifted children should be making a year's growth for a year in school. For a district to achieve its accountability measure, academically and intellectually gifted children must achieve at the distinguished level.
- *To do nothing is to do something.* Gifted education programs and strategies benefit gifted and talented students longitudinally, helping students increase aspirations for college and careers, determine post-secondary and career plans, develop creativity and motivation that is applied to later work, and achieving more advanced degrees (Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004; Delcourt, 1993; Hébert, 1993; Taylor, 1992; Lubinski, et al, 2001).

Achievement Trap: How America is Failing Millions of High-Achieving Students from Lower-Income Families

A report by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation
& Civic Enterprises with Original Research by Westat

- Fewer than 3.4 Million K-12 Children ages 2 in 10 residing in households with incomes below the national median rank in the top quartile academically.

- More than 1 Million K-12 Children who qualify for free and reduced lunch rank in the top quartile academically.

- When they enter elementary school, high-achieving, low income students mirror America both demographically and geographically.

- They exist proportionately to the overall first grade population
  - among males and females
  - within urban, suburban, and rural communities, and
  - are similar to the first grade population in terms of race and ethnicity.

- In elementary and high school, *lower-income students neither maintain their status as high achievers nor rise into the ranks of high achievers as frequently as higher-income students.*

- 5th Grade Reading: 56% of lower-income students have maintained their status as high achievers versus 69% of higher-income students

- High School Math:
  - 25% of high-achieving lower-income students fall out of top quartile
  - Only 16% of high achieving upper-income students do so

- Among those not in the top quartile in first grade, *children from families in the upper income* half are more than twice as likely as those from lower-income families to rise into the top academic quartile by fifth grade.

- The same is true between eighth and twelfth grades.

- High achieving lower-income students drop out of high school or do not graduate on time at a rate twice that of their higher-income peers (8% vs. 4%) but still far below the national average (30%).

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The 20 Most Important Points from Volume II
A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students

1. Acceleration is the most effective curriculum intervention for gifted children.

2. For bright students, acceleration has long-term beneficial effects, both academically and socially.

3. Acceleration is a virtually cost-free intervention.

4. Gifted children tend to be socially and emotionally more mature than their age-mates. For many bright students, acceleration provides a better personal maturity match with classmates.

5. When bright students are presented with curriculum developed for age-peers, they can become bored and unhappy and get turned off from learning.

6. Testing, especially above-level testing (using tests developed for older students), is highly effective in identifying students who would benefit from acceleration.

7. The evidence and mechanisms are available to help schools make good decisions about acceleration so that it is a low-risk/high-success intervention for qualified students. The *Iowa Acceleration Scale* is a proven, effective instrument for helping schools make decisions about whole-grade acceleration.

8. The 18 types of acceleration available to bright students fall into two broad categories: grade-based acceleration, which shortens the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system and subject-based acceleration, which allows for advanced content earlier than customary.

9. Entering school early is an excellent option for some gifted students both academically and socially. High ability young children who enroll early generally settle in smoothly with their older classmates.

10. Gifted students entering college early experience both short-term and long-term academic success, leading to long-term occupational success and personal satisfaction.

11. Many alternatives to full-time early college entrance are available for bright high school students who prefer to stay with age-peers. These include dual enrollment in high school and college, distance education, and summer programs. Advanced Placement (AP) is the best large-scale option for bright students who want to take college-level courses in high school.

12. Very few early college entrants experience social or emotional difficulties. When these do occur they are usually short-term and part of the adjustment process.

13. Radical acceleration (acceleration by two or more years) is effective academically and socially for highly gifted students.

14. Many educators have been largely negative about the practice of acceleration, despite abundant research evidence for its success and viability.

15. To encourage a major change in America's perceptions of educational acceleration, we will need to use all the engines of change: legislation, the courts, administrative rules, and professional initiatives.

16. Effective implementation of accelerative options for gifted students with disabilities is time- and resource-intensive.

17. It is important for parents to be fully involved in the decision-making process about their child's acceleration.

18. The few problems that have been experienced with acceleration have stemmed primarily from incomplete or poor planning.

19. Educational equity does not mean educational sameness. Equity respects individual differences in readiness to learn and recognizes the value of each student

20. The key question for educators is not whether to accelerate a gifted learner but rather how.

For more information on the research that informs these points, see Volume II of A Nation Deceived
www.nationdeceived.org